

with gentlemen," observed Bismarck, "I am a gentleman.

With a corsair I am *corsair et demi*" Hitler and Mussolini

would probably have made friends even without the

Abys-
sinian incident, for both were out for the destruction of the

status quo ; but the policy of sanctions made their rapproche-

ment inevitable. After the creation of the Axis it was difficult

for us, perhaps impossible, to avert war except by continual

surrenders. When our tardy rearmament campaign at last got

into its stride its effect was to bring war nearer, for with our

vast resources our strength was bound to grow rapidly from

year to year. Hitler and Mussolini, who had long been pre-

paring for conflict, adjusted their timetables accordingly, and

struck when their power was at its height.

The story of two decades outlined in this survey illustrates

anew the truth of two familiar aphorisms.

The first is the bitter cry of Oxenstierna, as he surveyed the

desolation of the Thirty Years⁹ War: *Quantula sapientia mundus*

regitur. The second is the- maxim of Frederick the Great:

" Diplomacy without armaments is like music without

instruments." In fairness to the British statesmen who bore the

burden and heat of the day, we must remember that public

opinion was divided and confused; that the Government dared

not commit us to responsibilities which we might be unable

or unwilling to fulfil; that Germany and Russia were never

easy to deal with ; that our policy had occasionally to be

subordinated to the fears of France; that the emergence of

Italian colonial ambitions was a new complication; that

American aid in the reconstruction of Europe was withheld; and that

the conduct of international relations is perhaps the most

difficult of the
arts. The tortured peoples craved for a new
world without
knowing how to create it, and no master-builder
was at hand.
The transition from the institutions and ideology
of the long
era of unfettered nationalism to a system of
collective security,
the limitation of armaments and peaceful
change proved too
great a task to be carried through with a
rush. Yet the
organization of the world, first attempted in
the League of
Nations, was well worth trying and will assuredly
be tried again.
Such a revolution requires time no less than skill
and resolu-
tion, but there is no reason to regard it as
beyond the wit of
man.